

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 229109

NODIS

FOR Z. BRZEZINSKI

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 07143 ACTION SECSTATE 22 SEP 77

QUOTE

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 7143

NODIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MOPS, MILI, LE, IS, US, PLO

SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: STATE 227802

1. I SAW WEIZMAN AT 2030 HOURS TONIGHT AT HIS RESIDENCE AND
CONVEYED INSTRUCTIONS REFTEL. DATT AND MAJOR GEN. GAZIT
WERE ALSO PRESENT. (FYI: FOR REASONS I HAVE YET TO DISCOVER,
REFTEL WAS NOT DELIVERED TO ME UNTIL 1955 HOURS LOCAL.)

2. WEIZMAN ASKED THAT I INFORM THE DEPARTMENT HE HAD
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TELEPHONED PRIME MINISTER BEGIN THAT HE WAS MEETING WITH
ME TONIGHT, AND THAT HE HAD REQUESTED A MEETING OF THE CABINET
DEFENSE COMMITTEE BE HELD AT 0930 HOURS TOMORROW MORNING
(SEPT 23) TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION IN LIGHT OF MY MESSAGE.
HE SAID DINITZ HAD TELEPHONED HIM AT 1500 HOURS THIS AFTERNOON
AND AS A RESULT OF THAT CONVERSATION HE THOUGHT HE HAD A
FAIRLY GOOD IDEA OF WHAT I WAS ABOUT TO TELL HIM.

3. I THEN WENT THROUGH YOUR INSTRUCTIONS WITH HIM LINE BY LINE SO THAT THERE COULD BE NO MIS-READING OF THE IMPORT OF OUR POSITION. WEIZMAN REPLIED THE FIRST THING WE SHOULD ALL UNDERSTAND WAS HIS GREAT CONCERN FOR THE SAFETY OF THE CHRISTIAN FORCES IN TEL SHARIFA. HE SAID A WRONG MOVE BY THE ISRAELIS AND HADDAD'S MEN COULD ALL BE MASSACRED. THEIR LIVES WERE VERY MUCH ON HIS CONSCIENCE. HE CONTESTED YOUR ASSERTION THAT THE IDF COULD RESPOND EFFECTIVELY WITHIN MINUTES FROM THE ISRAELI SIDE OF THE BORDER. HE POINTED OUT THAT TEL SHARIFA WAS APPROXIMATELY 8 MILES FROM THE BORDER, WHEREAS ISRAELI FORCES (WHICH ARE NOW IN MARJAYOUN) ARE ONLY A COUPLE OF KILOMETERS DISTANT FROM THE BATTLE AREA. THEIR CLOSE PRESENCE SERVED AS A "BIG MORALE FACTOR" IN SUPPORT OF THE 30 CHRISTIAN MILITIA HOLDING TEL SHARIFA WHO, HE SAID, COULD BE WIPED OUT IN A PALESTINIAN COUNTER-ATTACK BEFORE ISRAELI FORCES COULD REACT FROM ACROSS THE BORDER. WEIZMAN CATEGORICALLY DENIED THERE HAD BEEN ANY REINFORCEMENT OF ISRAELI FORCES INSIDE LEBANON.

4. WEIZMAN THEN BEGAN "TO THINK OUT LOUD," AS HE PUT IT, ABOUT HOW THE SITUATION COULD BE RESOLVED. HE ASKED, "COULD WE WORK OUT A SYSTEM WHEREBY A CEASEFIRE WILL START AT A SPECIFIED HOUR AND THE IDF WILL COMMENCE WITHDRAWAL AT THE SAME TIME." I REPLIED THAT I VERY MUCH DOUBTED
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THE LEBANESE WOULD BUY THIS. I SAID IT WAS MY PERSONAL JUDGEMENT THERE WAS NO HOPE FOR A CEASEFIRE UNTIL THE ISRAELIS HAD WITHDRAWN ALL THEIR FORCES ACROSS THE BORDER.

5. GENERAL GAZIT THEN SUGGESTED WHAT HE TERMED A "FACE-SAVING" CONCEPT INVOLVING TWO PHASES. PHASE ONE WOULD BE A DECLARED STANDSTILL AT AN AGREED-UPON HOUR DURING WHICH THE PARTIES COULD FIRE (IF THEY SO WISHED OR NEEDED) BUT THERE COULD BE NO ADVANCES OF FORCES OR CHANGES IN POSITION. DURING PHASE I THE IDF FORCES WOULD WITHDRAW BACK TO ISRAELI TERRITORY. PHASE II WOULD BE THE ACTUAL CEASEFIRE WHICH GAZIT ENVISAGED AS GOING INTO EFFECT ABOUT 12 HOURS AFTER PHASE I STARTED. WEIZMAN THOUGHT THIS IDEA HAD MERIT AND TOLD GAZIT HE WANTED HIM TO PRESENT THE CONCEPT TO THE CABINET DEFENSE COMMITTEE IN THE MORNING.

6. THE DEFENSE MINISTER OBSERVED THAT HE FOUND SEVERAL "GOOD POINTS" IN THE MESSAGE AND THAT HE WAS "NOT ENTIRELY UNHAPPY" WITH WHAT I HAD TOLD HIM. HE IS ENCOURAGED THAT WE UNDERSTAND THE NEED FOR PLO WITHDRAWAL BEYOND 10

KILOMETERS FROM THE BORDER. AND HE WAS BUOYED BY THE LEBANESE COMMITMENT TO TRY AND NEGOTIATE A FURTHER WITHDRAWAL OF THE PLO AT A LATER DATE. HE WAS ALSO RELIEVED BY NEWS THAT THE LEBANESE WERE PREPARED FOR DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS UNDER ILMAC AUSPICES IF A CEASE FIRE COULD BE ARRANGED. GAZIT COMPLAINED ABOUT THE LEBANESE INSISTENCE ON SECRECY. I SAID I THOUGHT IT IMPERATIVE THE TWO SIDES BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, EVEN IN A CVAVE. IF NECESSARY. WEIZMAN, WHO BY THIS TIME WAS BUSY POURING SCOTCH, EMPHATICALLY AGREED.

7. I THEN BRACED WEIZMAN ON THE SERIOUS PROBLEM WE FACED WITH THE CONGRESS AND THE PRESS OVER USE OF U.S. SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT IN THIS OPERATION. I TOLD HIM I HAD
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NO INSTRUCTIONS TO HIT HIM ANY HARDER ON THIS POINT THAN UNDER SECRETARY HABIB HAD DINITZ, BUT THAT HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE GRAVITY OF THE IMPLICATIONS. HE WANLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE WERE U.S. ENGINES IN THE SHERMAN TANKS BEING USED BY ISRAELI FORCES IN THE OPERATION AND THAT THE APCS WERE OF U.S. ORGIN. BUT OTHER THAN HOLDING HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS HE MADE NO EFFORT TO REBUT THE CHARGE.

8. WEIZMAN ENDED THE CONVERSATION ON AN OPTIMISTIC NOTE. HE SAID HE WANTED WASHINGTON TO KNOW HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD EACH POINT THAT HAD BEEN MADE, AND THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT "SOMETHING CAN BE WORKED OUT IN THE NEXT 18 HOURS."

9. COMMENT: I AM GETTING GUN SHY ABOUT PREDICTING THE COLOR OF THE NEXT RABBIT THE ISRAELIS WILL PULL OUT OF THE HAT. BUT IF WEIZMAN WAS LEVELING TONIGHT (AND I HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE) I BELIEVE HE SEES THE SITUATION CLEARLY. CONSEQUENTLY, I THINK WE ARE PROBABLY CLOSE TO GETTING THE IDF FORCE BACK ACROSS THE BORDER IF WEIZMAN CAN PREVAIL TOMORROW MORNING IN JERUSALEM. BEYOND THAT, I SHALL WAIT FOR WHAT THE MORROW BRINGS. A FINAL NOTE. NOTHING IN ANYTHING SAID TONIGHT LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT WEIZMAN, AT LEAST, IS CONSIDERING PULLING HADDAD'S MEN OUT OF TEL SHARIFA. EACH TIME THE SUBJECT WAS RAISED HE REVERTED TO HIS THEME THAT HAD THE OPERATION NOT TAKEN PLACE HE WAS CONVINCED THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN FORCES EFFORT IN SOUTH LEBANON WOULD HAVE COLLAPSED. THAT'S THE LINE AND HE SEEMS TO THINK HE IS STUCK WITH IT.

10. FYI: TO ASSIST WEIZMAN IN HIS PRESENTATION WITH THE CABINET DEFENSE COMMITTEE I AGREED TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO HIM AT THE AIRPORT TOMORROW MORNING THE TALKING POINTS
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CONTAINED IN PARA ONE OF REFTEL PLUS PARA 4.

11. REQUEST DEPARTMENT REPEAT THIS MESSAGE TO BEIRUT AND
DAMASCUS.
VIETS.
UNQUOTE VANCE".

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NNN

Message Attributes

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